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Environment and sustainable development: further implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Further implementation of the outcome of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/262, in which the Assembly decided to convene an international meeting in 2004, which will include a high-level segment, to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as called for in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The report provides an overview of activities at the national, regional and international levels that have been planned in anticipation of the international meeting, to be hosted in Mauritius. The report also provides information on the schedule of regional preparatory meetings that will be undertaken in the effort to coordinate regional platforms based on the national assessment reports of small island developing States.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 57/262, inter alia, the General Assembly (a) decided to convene an international meeting in 2004, including a high-level segment, to undertake a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as called for in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation), and welcomed the offer of the Government of Mauritius to host the international meeting; (b) also decided that the comprehensive review should seek a renewed commitment by all countries and should focus on practical and pragmatic actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action, inter alia, through the mobilization of resources for small island developing States; (c) further decided to convene regional preparatory meetings of small island developing States in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions, as well as an interregional preparatory meeting for all small island developing States, to undertake the review of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional and regional levels and to identify and develop small island developing States-specific inputs into the review; (d) called upon the United Nations system in general and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat in particular, as well as the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the multilateral financial institutions and the Global Environment Facility, to put in place modalities at the international level to facilitate the meetings; and (e) requested the United Nations system to seek country inputs which were short and well focused and drew on, inter alia, material prepared for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in order to minimize the burden on participating States while maximizing the usefulness of the information gathered.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly also invited all Member States, relevant regional and international agencies and the major groups identified in Agenda 21 to participate fully in the activities in preparation for the comprehensive review; invited international meetings of relevance to small island developing States to provide relevant input into the comprehensive review and its preparatory process; called for the participation, as observers, of associate member countries of the relevant regional commissions involved in the process; and requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

II. Background

3. It will be recalled that the adoption by the international community in 1994 of the Barbados Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was seen as the first example of a global partnership in which developed and developing countries undertook to work together in support of small island developing States' development strategies, while working to ensure the protection of the fragile environment of those States.

4. That commitment to a global partnership in support of the sustainable development of small island developing States was strongly reaffirmed during the 1999 twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, which was held in 1999 to review the implementation of the Programme of Action, and was reiterated

during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002.

5. Recognizing small island developing States as a special case both for environment and development, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, in chapter VII on the sustainable development of small island developing States, called for action at all levels to accelerate the national and regional implementation of the Programme of Action, inter alia, with adequate financial resources, assistance for capacity-building and through the transfer of environmentally sound technologies.

6. In addition to those cross-sectoral imperatives, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation reiterated the need for continued attention to priority areas identified by small island developing States as crucial to their sustainable development process, including support for the finalization and early operationalization of economic, social and environmental vulnerability indices; support for efforts aimed at poverty eradication; the further implementation of sustainable fisheries management; the development of programmes on marine and coastal biodiversity and fresh water; assistance in dealing with climate change and natural disasters; support for the promotion of efficient use of energy, including indigenous and renewable energy sources; strengthening health-care services; and the need to ensure that, in the elaboration of the World Trade Organization work programme on trade in small economies, due account was taken of small island developing States, which have severe structural handicaps in integrating into the global economy, within the context of the Doha agenda.

7. Preparations for the 10-year review of the Programme of Action will benefit from the unique opportunity to harness the energy and focus on implementation and cooperation through partnerships generated at Johannesburg with a view to mobilizing the United Nations system and the wider international community in support of the small island developing States agenda.

8. The present report provides an overview of activities undertaken and preparations under way at the national, regional and international levels for the international meeting to be held in Mauritius. It also gives a forecast of future initiatives that will form part of the preparatory process for the international meeting.

Methodology and structure

9. In the preparation of the present report, the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, including relevant regional commissions, were consulted through the Inter-Agency Task Force established by the Secretary-General for the purpose of preparing for the international meeting.

10. The present report also includes information on activities undertaken at the regional level in preparation for the international meeting by non-United Nations intergovernmental regional bodies and by a number of Governments at the national level.

III. Institutional arrangements

11. Preparations at the institutional level within the United Nations system have been launched and are summarized below.

12. On 21 February 2003, the Secretary-General established an Inter-Agency Task Force comprised of representatives of all the key organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system[1] involved in the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Task Force held its first meeting in New York during the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

13. The Task Force was established to enable the United Nations system, with its key organs, organizations and bodies, to improve coordination and enhance cooperation on matters pertaining to the preparatory process leading up to and including the international meeting itself in 2004. It is envisaged that the Task Force would retain its mandate as regards the coordination of matters concerning small island developing States after the Mauritius international meeting.

14. A virtual Internet network for communications has been established on the Small Island Developing States Network (SIDSNet) for the purpose of updating all members of the Task Force on new developments. Task Force members have been encouraged to fully utilize the virtual network, which also allows for the sharing of relevant data and reports among Task Force members, greatly enhancing its work.

15. Furthermore, pursuant to resolution 57/262, a voluntary fund has been established for the purpose of assisting small island developing States, including the least developed among them, to participate fully and effectively in both the Mauritius international meeting and the various regional preparatory meetings and processes. Governments and organizations have been invited to consider making a contribution to that fund, and positive responses have already been received.

16. The Small Island Developing States Unit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs responded to the mandate given by the General Assembly by inviting small island developing States, through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), to present views on the process leading up to the international meeting. AOSIS transmitted to the Department a report on a brainstorming session held in San Pedro, Belize, in December 2002, which constituted the basic framework for how AOSIS viewed the preparations for the international meeting. Following rigorous consultations with AOSIS, the Unit developed a questionnaire template for national assessment reports, which was circulated in February 2002 to the United Nations Member States. Discussions have been initiated with various funding organizations, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commonwealth Secretariat with a view to securing support for the national review and reporting exercises to be undertaken by small island developing States. Moreover, the Unit has been working closely with the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States on preparations for the international meeting, in close consultation with AOSIS.

17. The national assessment reports are expected to play a key role in the preparatory process leading up to the Mauritius meeting in 2004 in the context of the regional preparatory meetings and the interregional meeting to be held in January 2004. While the template focused on issues concerning the national implementation of the Programme of Action, it also allowed for small island developing States to identify individual priority areas.

18. Although efforts were made to produce a concise and succinct template to assist small island developing States in their assessments, it is very likely that many

of the national assessments will not be completed by the commencement of the regional preparatory meetings, mainly because of the difficulty of securing technical and financial assistance for small island developing States to complete the exercise. However, it is expected that the preparatory meetings will afford an opportunity for exchange of information on issues of national concern and allow for the identification of regional priorities and the coordination of strategies to further address them. Small island developing States are nonetheless being strongly encouraged to continue the preparation of their national reports as an important part of the review process. On completion, the reports will be circulated through SIDSNet.

19. In draft resolution II recommended by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session for adoption by the Economic and Social Council,[7] further clarification was provided of the preparatory process for the international meeting. It was agreed, based on General Assembly resolution 57/262, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the debate on the issue held during the eleventh session, that the Commission, during its twelfth session, to be held in 2004, will convene a three-day preparatory session for the international meeting. The preparatory meeting will consider a synthesis report of the Secretary-General that will be prepared on the basis of the reports of the review process, in particular those on the outcome of national initiatives and regional preparations. The wider international community, including the donor community, is also invited to submit information on current and planned activities in support of the sustainable development of small island developing States.

IV. Preparations at the international level

20. In accordance with the mandates contained in General Assembly resolution 57/262 and the above-mentioned draft resolution recommended by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session, the widest possible involvement in the review process is being encouraged, including, in addition to Member States, the participation of the major groups identified in Agenda 21, non-independent small island developing States, and agencies and organizations both within and outside the United Nations system.

21. It is anticipated that, building on the momentum of the Johannesburg Summit, opportunities to explore partnership initiatives between small island developing States and donor countries and organizations will be pursued; indeed, a number of those are already under active consideration. Several agencies within the United Nations system have also strengthened their programmes for providing technical assistance and developing the capacities of small island developing States in a range of sectors and disciplines. The preparatory process for the Mauritius international meeting offers an ideal opportunity for those and other organizations and donor countries to publicize new or existing initiatives which would support the advancement of implementation of the small island developing States agenda.

22. The Small Island Developing States Unit is currently in the process of collecting and compiling best practices and success stories regarding field projects and programmes in small island developing States aimed at implementing the Programme of Action at the international, national, regional and local levels. A

publication and a web-based databank are also envisaged, featuring best practices and success stories, in time for the Mauritius international meeting.

V. Preparations at the regional level

23. Preparations are under way for the convening of regional preparatory meetings for:

(a) Pacific small island developing States, to be held in Apia, Samoa, from 4 to 8 August 2003;

(b) Caribbean small island developing States, to be held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 18 to 22 August 2003;

(c) Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas small island developing States to be held in Praia, Cape Verde, from 1 to 5 September 2003.

24. The Small Island Developing States Unit is cooperating with AOSIS to ensure that the results of various experts meetings are brought before the intergovernmental process. So far the results of three such meetings have been circulated to AOSIS member States:

(a) Report of a workshop on the theme "Towards sustainable development in the Caribbean Islands: capacity-building for managing and protecting biological resources" (Cuba, 25-29 November 2002);

(b) Report of an interregional workshop to support the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants in small island developing States (Antigua and Barbuda, 7-10 April 2003);

(c) Report of a workshop on the theme "Using information for decision-making on sustainable development: issues and challenges for Caribbean small island developing States" (St. Lucia, 27-28 May 2003).

25. Other expert meetings on thematic issues have been planned, focusing on priority areas of small island developing States, including:

(a) A workshop on energy and capacity-building, held in Niue from 7-11 July 2003;

(b) A workshop on the vulnerability of small island developing States, to be held in Dominica from 29 September to 3 October 2003.

26. Those regional preparatory and expert meetings will culminate in the convening of an interregional preparatory meeting with ministerial-level participation to harmonize the platform for all small island developing States, to be held in Nassau, Bahamas, from 26 to 30 January 2004.

27. The need to ensure full and effective participation by small island developing States, including non-self-governing small island developing States and major groups, is included in the mandate of both General Assembly resolution 57/262 and draft resolution II recommended by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.[2] The provision of adequate resources to facilitate such participation is therefore an urgent requirement.

28. Beyond preparations for the regional preparatory meetings, small island developing States have been engaged in other regional activities that will inform the review process.

A. Pacific region

29. The Pacific region has held regional post-Summit workshops, and supported by the Council of the Regional Organizations of the Pacific, the Pacific small island developing States are preparing for a regional meeting to be held in Apia, Samoa, from 4 to 8 August 2003.

30. Preparations in the region have been spearheaded by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, with the full support of the other member organizations of the Community of Regional Organizations in the Pacific.

B. Caribbean region

31. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional office for the Caribbean and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) secretariat, which together constitute the joint secretariat for the implementation of the Programme of Action in the Caribbean region, have been giving active consideration to preparations for the Mauritius international meeting, at both the institutional and country levels. At a meeting of the Caribbean small island developing States and members of the Caribbean Inter-Agency Collaborative Group, regional preparation for the review exercise was launched with a view to maximizing the outcome of the Trinidad and Tobago regional meeting to be convened from 18 to 22 August 2003.

32. To prepare for the regional meeting, the ECLAC subregional office circulated a questionnaire to CARICOM States and regional and international agencies involved in the implementation of the Programme of Action in the region in order to comprehensively evaluate the region's progress against previously established targets. That questionnaire, which was intended to elucidate regional objectives, will complement the national assessment reports.

C. Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas region

33. A meeting will be convened for the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Seas region in Praia, Cape Verde, from 1 to 5 September 2003. The Small Island Developing States Unit is pursuing a proposal for a cooperative arrangement for the Atlantic and Indian Ocean small island developing States, and has most recently been consulting with the Indian Ocean Commission and the Commonwealth Secretariat. It is also expected that there will be consultations on the proposal for a cooperative arrangement during or after that meeting.

VI. Preparations at the national level

34. The difficulties experienced by small island developing States in completing their national assessment reports has already been addressed. Work is ongoing with a view to their submission in due course. In the meantime, Governments are being encouraged to initiate local public awareness and educational campaigns, in order to raise the level of awareness of small island developing States populations regarding the vital importance of the Mauritius international meeting in bringing the major issues to international attention.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

35. **Work in preparation for the international meeting is progressing steadily. Ultimately, the success of the review exercise will depend not only on the efforts of the small island developing States themselves but also on the level of engagement of the wider international community in the process, in the spirit of cooperation and partnership.**

36. **The fullest participation of Member States, the United Nations system international organizations and major groups is therefore strongly encouraged in order to ensure the success of this effort to comprehensively review implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.**

37. **It is expected that the early designation of a high-level official as Secretary-General for the international meeting will enhance effective preparation for the meeting, as called for in General Assembly resolution 57/262.**

38. **The outcomes of the regional preparatory meetings planned for the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions will be emphasized in the report to the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its twelfth session so as to link regional efforts with the substantive outcome of the international meeting.**

39. **The Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States will continue their close collaboration and their consultations with AOSIS in this process in order to facilitate active intergovernmental support for the preparatory process and the widest engagement of small island developing States Members at the upcoming regional and subregional meetings.**

40. **To support all of those efforts, there is a need for high-level regional and global advocacy. It is recommended that the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat continue to be involved in developing the advocacy campaign for the meeting and establish an inter-agency communications group for that purpose.**

Notes

[1] The following bodies are represented on the Inter-Agency Task Force: United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States of the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations University, Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, World Trade Organization, World Meteorological Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Civil Aviation Organization, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Telecommunication Union, World Intellectual Property Organization, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council (2003), Supplement No. 9* (E/2003/29), chap. I, sect. A.